

Proclamation 5018 of February 3, 1983

Year of the Bible, 1983

*By the President of the United States of America
A Proclamation*

Of the many influences that have shaped the United States of America into a distinctive Nation and people, none may be said to be more fundamental and enduring than the Bible.

Deep religious beliefs stemming from the Old and New Testaments of the Bible inspired many of the early settlers of our country, providing them with the strength, character, convictions, and faith necessary to withstand great hardship and danger in this new and rugged land. These shared beliefs helped forge a sense of common purpose among the widely dispersed colonies—a sense of community which laid the foundation for the spirit of nationhood that was to develop in later decades.

The Bible and its teachings helped form the basis for the Founding Fathers' abiding belief in the inalienable rights of the individual, rights which they found implicit in the Bible's teachings of the inherent worth and dignity of each individual. This same sense of man patterned the convictions of those who framed the English system of law inherited by our own Nation, as well as the ideals set forth in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

For centuries the Bible's emphasis on compassion and love for our neighbor has inspired institutional and governmental expressions of benevolent outreach such as private charity, the establishment of schools and hospitals, and the abolition of slavery.

Many of our greatest national leaders—among them Presidents Washington, Jackson, Lincoln, and Wilson—have recognized the influence of the Bible on our country's development. The plainspoken Andrew Jackson referred to the Bible as no less than "the rock on which our Republic rests." Today our beloved America and, indeed, the world, is facing a decade of enormous challenge. As a people we may well be tested as we have seldom, if ever, been tested before. We will need resources of spirit even more than resources of technology, education, and armaments. There could be no more fitting moment than now to reflect with gratitude, humility, and urgency upon the wisdom revealed to us in the writing that Abraham Lincoln called "the best gift God has ever given to man . . . But for it we could not know right from wrong."

The Congress of the United States, in recognition of the unique contribution of the Bible in shaping the history and character of this Nation, and so many of its citizens, has by Senate Joint Resolution 165 authorized and requested the President to designate the year 1983 as the "Year of the Bible."

96 Stat. 1211.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, in recognition of the contributions and influence of the Bible on our Republic and our people, do hereby proclaim 1983 the Year of the Bible in the United States. I encourage all citizens, each in his or her own way, to reexamine and rediscover its priceless and timeless message.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this third day of February, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-three, and of

the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and seventh.

RONALD REAGAN

Proclamation 5019 of February 3, 1983

American Heart Month, 1983

*By the President of the United States of America
A Proclamation*

Diseases of the heart and blood vessels are our Nation's most pressing health problem. Over sixty million Americans are afflicted by one or another of this family of diseases, which cause nearly a million deaths annually, disable many millions of others, and cost the Nation more than \$60 billion each year. The leading killers among the cardiovascular diseases are coronary heart disease and stroke.

In 1948 a newly created Federal agency—now the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute—and a private health organization, the American Heart Association, joined hands to combat the cardiovascular diseases. Their combined efforts were directed toward the conquest of these diseases through prevention, diagnosis, and treatment; through the training of new research workers and clinicians in the cardiovascular field; and through support for community service programs.

Until the mid-1960s, mortality from coronary heart disease had continued to increase despite our best efforts; however, in 1965 mortality from heart disease began a steady decline that continues to the present. From 1972 to 1980, mortality rates from coronary heart disease declined by 22.5 percent, and mortality rates from stroke declined by 36.5 percent.

Advances in diagnosis and treatment have been major factors in these reductions. But perhaps equally important, large numbers of Americans have voluntarily modified their habits and lifestyles: many have quit or cut down on cigarette smoking, are watching their weight and blood cholesterol levels, exercising more, and seeking the help of a physician in the control of treatable conditions which increase the risk of premature arteriosclerosis and its consequences.

Though we have made considerable progress in reducing the toll in illness, disability, and death caused by cardiovascular diseases, these diseases continue to be a serious threat to the health and well-being of our citizens. To encourage continued application of what is known about the prevention and relief of cardiovascular diseases and to stimulate the development of new knowledge and techniques that may bring about their ultimate conquest, the Congress has requested that the President annually proclaim February as American Heart Month.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the month of February 1983 as American Heart Month. I invite the Governors of the States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the officials of other areas subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, and the American people, to join me in reaffirming our commitment to the resolution of the nationwide problem of cardiovascular disease.